The SCEPTRE

December 1930

THE SEASON'S SPIRIT
By Josephine Dandridge

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DISILLUSIONED
A Story
By Carolyn Kirkpatrick

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CHRISTMAS THOUGHT
A Poem
By Lou Martin Miller

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. . . ALSO . . .

Lucia Harding — *Catherine Jones*
Janice Newton — *Rebecca Hassell*

EXCHANGES

The SCEPTRE

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FOREWORD

The year of 1930 has come to a close. The days which stretched before us, on Jan. 1, as endless aeons of time, now seem as but a day. The days of the year have been filled with some regrettable acts and deeds but these are more than outweighed by fond memories of pleasure, of kind deeds done for others, and of timely words spoken to us. Often times we have done things we should not have done.

But Christmas is almost here, and Christmas is the time to forget and to forgive; to start a new year with the purpose to live. It is the time for enjoyment, for pleasure, and for fun-making. How many of us spent from January to June looking back at the good time we had last Christmas, and from June to December looking forward to the good time we will have this Christmas!

And after the pleasures of Christmas—What have we?—the beginning of a new year with its hopes and aspirations; a chance to start over again with brave resolutions and a strong determination. The beginning of the new year brings us a hope for better things, and the end of the new year will bring us a sense of "something accomplished; something done."

As Christmas approaches let us remember all these things and enjoy our holidays to the fullest. And may the remembrance of the birth of our Saviour and Lord be a vital part of that enjoyment.

We wish you ALL a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Successful New Year.

—*The Associate Editor.*

Season's Greetings

"Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

What a glorious message was heralded by the angels at our Saviour's birth! And we, too, would give honour and glory to God at this season of happiness, expressing our gratitude and thankfulness for the greatest Gift the world has ever known—His only Son. How happy are we that He was born, that He dwelt among us, that He bore our sins and died that we might live! Let us not forget to give Him all the praise during this joyous season.

Peace. All through the ages have we been struggling for peace—world peace, an international peace that encircles the globe with love. Let us look to the Author of it and there we shall find perfect peace.

Goodwill toward men. May it echo throughout the lands and blend with the others to form a perfect harmony of angelic song. Let us join the heavenly choir; let our hearts unite in goodwill to the world.

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by Lucia Harding

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

Between the dimness of morning
And the darkness of night,
There suddenly appears a glimmer of light,
The shepherds who watched
Their flock on the hill,
Stood transfixed with rapture,
Silent and still.
An angel of God
Came down from above,
Completely enveloped in heavenly love,
"Shepherds behold! Leave all! Arise!
Follow the highest star in the skies.
Tonight in a manger
The Saviour is born."
And the shepherds departed
With the breaking of dawn.
They found Him, the babe,
As the angels had said,
With a halo of light
Encircling his head.
The shepherds bowed low,
With reverence and awe,
At the Christ child nestling
In a manger of straw.
Then the shepherds arose,
Went into the morn,
Singing, "Glory to God!
The Saviour is born!"

by Carolyn Kirkpatrick

THE ORIGINAL SPIRIT OF GIVING

It is indeed a tragedy, the manner in which the Christmas Spirit has changed since the first Christmas day. We have gotten entirely away from the original idea. Today we live in a mad whirl of existence. When Christmas time draws near, life becomes a wearisome burden. There are dozens of people we must give gifts to, either because they are our friends and relatives or because they gave us lovely gifts the Christmas before, and we feel obligated to give them presents equally as fine in return. Christmas is now merely a time of exchanging gifts simply because of duty, custom, or other reasons.

On that glorious day one thousand nine hundred and thirty years ago, shepherds brought their lowly simple gifts and laid them at the feet of the Christ Child. Then came wise men offering their rich gifts of rare perfume, frankincense, and myrrh. Both came with the same motive, that of paying homage, honor, reverence, and love.

Today we should look back and think of that wonderful day so long ago and make an attempt to pattern our spirit of giving after that beautiful example offered us by the shepherds and wise men of old. There are so many poor people around us, so many people for whom we could do much. People need the material things of life as well as love, sympathy, and encouragement. And now when Christmas time draws near how much more pleasure we should gain if we should give to those who have not, rather than to those who have been treated more kindly by fate. Gifts would be more appreciated by those who are

unaccustomed to the better things of life. Those to whom we give, who already have, do not miss our gifts and could not possibly appreciate them as those for whom kind remembrances are unusual things. So let us pause for a moment in this whirl of life and decide whether or not gifts prompted by the spirit of love and gifts for those who have nothing would not mean more to us and inspire a greater love in our hearts for the Saviour than those gifts which are given for show and from a sense of duty.

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by Iris Bryson

'TIS ONLY A ROSE

'Tis only a rose,
But one that she chose
That night from her glorious tresses,
So fresh and so fair
In its silken lair,
And warmed with her soft caresses.

And bright were her eyes
As the stars in the skies,
As she beamed on me, sweetly smiling;
And I smothered a sigh
And my heart beat high—
That smile all my soul beguiling.

And the rose is the flower
That brings back the hour
When I dreamed of a love so divine,
And all things are new,
For my dream has come true—
The fair one has now become mine.

by Lucy Woodworth

MARY SMITH'S CHRISTMAS

The crowded streets of New York were more crowded than ever as people hustled to and fro doing their Christmas shopping. It was just a week until Christmas and it seemed that every one was following the slogan, "Do Your Shopping Now and Avoid the Rush." There was snow on the streets and flakes of snow were scurrying through the air. No one seemed to mind this weather condition, however, for is snow not an essential element to the true Christmas spirit?

In a great big palatial home on Long Island the retinue of servants belonging to R. B. Glendale, Esquire, were busy preparing for the home-coming of Robert Glendale, Jr., and his sister Betty who were returning from college for the Christmas holidays. These two attractive young people had been "nursed in the lap of luxury" all their lives but, having been taught by their parents the true value of things, they were not spoiled and they did enjoy having a good time. The servants were preparing for these good times. There were to be dances, parties, theatre-going and other entertainments, not to mention the delights of out-door sports, such as skiing and skating.

The preparations were completed; Bob and Betty came. These two were popular. They knew how to have a good time and how to show others the secret of having a good time. The week flew by on wings with days of gayety and laughter on top of gayety and laughter until, before they knew it, it was the day before Christmas. Neither of them had bought the other a present so they went to the city to buy each other a gift.

The scene was very similar to that of the day on which they had arrived, only the streets were more crowded, the stores looked a little gayer, and the snow scurried through the air a little faster.

Mary Smith, her thread-bare coat drawn tightly around her, was standing before a gayly decorated shop window with a look of yearning on her face. Her eyes were fastened with longing on a handsome doll which attracted strongly her beauty-loving soul. Some one jostled her elbow and a pathetically small bundle fell to the pavement. From its torn side there rolled some hard, dry beans. It was hopeless to try to pick them up, and one little teardrop trickled down Mary's cheek in spite of her brave effort to restrain it. Those beans had been the only luxury she could afford for her own and her sister "Snooky's" dinner Christmas day. Now they would have to eat their mush and molasses as usual and Christmas would have no meaning for them.

"Were those your beans?" a kind voice said in Mary's ear.

Mary glanced up with a tremulous smile. She couldn't believe that any one could speak so gently, and her surprise was greater when she saw that the speaker was a well-dressed young man with the distinct air about him of being from one of the wealthiest families of New York.

He must be different, Mary thought, so she hesitated no longer in telling him all about it.

"Yes, those were my beans and they were all the 'extra' I had for mine and Snooky's Christmas dinner. Now we won't have anything but mush and molasses, same as usual. That's what I get though for staring at the dolls instead of going home to Snooky. I guess I'd better be going right now."

"Which doll were you looking at?"

Mary stopped in her hurry to go to Snooky, came back to the window of the shop and pointed, "That big doll in there with the big brown eyes and curly hair. Don't you think she's a dear?"

It had been many years since Bob Glendale had played with dolls and for all those years he had scorned them as feminine evils but now to comfort the girl's heart he said, "Yes, she is pretty."

Once more Mary started homeward. This time Bob told her to get in his car and he would take her home. He didn't have to ask her where she lived. It was written on her pinched cheeks, her thread-bare clothing, and in the story of the spilled beans. He drove right to Tenement Row in East End and, when Mary pointed out the house, he stopped before it and let her go to Snooky. Did I say house? It was a mere hole but love was there and so, at least, it was a home.

The next day was Christmas. Mary and Snooky were eating their breakfast of mush and molasses with the thought of a dinner of mush and molasses when Mary happened to look out the window.

"Look, Snooky! The Prince!" she exclaimed.

Sure enough there was the Prince, for so they called Bob. "Who do you suppose the pretty lady is? Isn't she beautiful? Oh! (with thrills of rapture), they're coming in!"

Mary ran to open the door for them, with Snooky close at her heels. Bob said, "Mary and Snooky, this is my sister, Betty. We've got something out in the car for your Christmas present. Come out and see what it is."

Mary and Snooky dashed to the car and peered in. Before their eyes they saw a big doll with big brown

eyes and curly hair—that was for Mary, they knew—a beautiful green sled with gold letters on it—that was for Snooky, they knew. And in the car there was some "extra" for Christmas dinner and it wasn't beans, either. It was a turkey, and everything to go with it, including fruits and nuts. Bob and Betty took Mary and Snooky for a ride in the car and brought them back to their sumptuous dinner and Christmas did mean something to them after all.

by Ariel McNinch

PURSUIT

Full moon. Quiet patchworks on a
Bed of fallen leaves.
Frost-bitten, cold persimmons,
Silent colleagues of the escapade.
Music! The eager sharp cry of
Hounds, scenting, racing through the
Underbrush, hurtling ditches, fighting
Briars, pressing ever forward.
The exhilaration of a sporting instinct
Roused. The call of Nimrod.

The chase abruptly ended.
Dog and man crowded close
Eager, panting; lights, a bag, frenzied
Barks, and high above, clutching the
Farthest limb, a tiny grey life,
Lonely, terrified, hungry little o'possum.

by Janice Newton

THE VIRGIN MARY

Mary, the mother of Christ, most blessed of all women, has given to us that which we reverence most highly today. It was on that great day in the year 5 B. C. that she gave to the world her son, and in our commemoration of this event we should not fail to remember the magnificent part she played. She completed her wonderful mission that day, and from then until now, we have celebrated Christmas or the birth of Christ. Not only are we thankful to the Father and to the Son, but to this mother who presented to us the wonderful child.

Think of the emotions and sensations she must have had that night so long ago, when she gazed down upon the child so radiant and holy in his lowly crib, If only we could experience the joy, the depth of feeling that Mary felt. Christmas was to her the great event of her life. She rendered unto God that which was God's, and gave unto us His only begotten Son that we might not perish but have everlasting life. Was not this the supreme gift? We are sure that our Father wishes us to be supremely happy this old month of Chislev, and to show our love by presenting gifts to those whom we cherish most dearly. Let us not forget, however, in our joy and celebration, those to whom we owe the greatest gift of all—the gift of our love, our service and our worship.

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by Lou Martin Miller

CHRISTMAS THOUGHT

Hark! the Christmas bells are ringing
Lo, the Christmas angels singing,
"Peace on earth, goodwill to men."
But since Christ was born in Bethlehem
There's been no peace, no great goodwill
The fiery cross is burning still.
O'er hill and wave; o'er vale and water
It sheds its light; leads men to slaughter,
Oft for a cause that's great and just
Oft for revenge, or greed, or lust.
They follow its light as the wise men of yore
Followed a star to a stable door,
There to pray to a Babe, to whom angels sang;
For whom the heavenly anthems rang;
Who gave His life that men might be
From tyrant's shackles wholly free,
We pray He has not died in vain.
We pray that he will come again,
And let us pray too, while angels sing,
For "Peace on earth; goodwill to men."

Compiled by Mrs. John Lyon
Indebted to Schauffler—Christmas

CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

It was the habit of Him whose birthday we celebrate to take what was good in men and remold it to higher uses. And so it is peculiarly fitting that the anniversary of Christmas, when it was first celebrated in the second century, should have taken from heathen mythology and customs the more beautiful parts for its own use.

The pagan nations of antiquity always had a tendency to worship the sun as the giver of light and life. Their festivals in its honor took place near the 22nd of December, the shortest day in the year, when the sun begins its upward course, thrilling men with the distant promise of Spring.

Among the Romans this holiday was called Saturnalia and was marked by great merriment which extended even to the slaves. There were feasting and gifts, and the houses were hung with evergreens. A more barbarous form of these rejoicings took place among the rude peoples of the north where great blocks of wood blazed in honor of Thor and Odin, and sacrifices of men and cattle were made. Mistletoe was cut from the sacred oaks with a golden sickle by the Prince of the Druids, between whom and the Fire-worshippers of Persia there was an affinity both in character and in customs.

The ancient Goths and Saxons called this festival Yule which is preserved for us in the Scottish word for Christmas and in the Yule log. The ancient Teutons celebrated the season by decking a fir-tree; for they thought of the sun riding higher and higher

in the heavens, as the spreading and blossoming of a great tree. Our own Christmas fir was decked as a symbol of the sun tree. The lights represent the flashes of lightning overhead; the golden apples, nuts, and ball symbolize the sun, the moon and the stars, while the little animals hung in the branches betoken sacrifices made in gratitude to the sun-god.

As Christianity replaced paganism, the Christians, in the tolerant spirit of their Master, adopted these beautiful old usages, merely changing the spirit.

"Merrie old England" was the soil in which Merrie Christmas took its firmest root. Even in Anglo-Saxon days we hear of Alfred holding high revelry in December, 878, so that he allowed the Danes to surprise him, cut his army to pieces, and send him a fugitive. The court revelries increased in splendor after the conquest. Christmas then was not a single day of sport. It began Dec. 16 and ended on Jan. 6, or Twelfth Night. All this period was devoted to holiday making.

It was a democratic festival. All classes mixed in its merry-makings. Hospitality was universal. An English country gentleman of the 15th and 16th centuries held open house. With daybreak on Christmas morning the tenants and neighbors thronged into the hall. Ale, blackjacks, and cheese, with toast and sugar, and nutmeg, went plentifully round. The great sausage must be boiled at daybreak, and if it failed to be ready two young men took the cook by her arms and ran her around the market place 'till she was ashamed of her laziness.

There were many superstitions connected with Christmas. The bees were said to sing, the cattle to kneel, in honor of the manger, and the sheep to go in procession in commemoration of the visit of the

angel to the shepherds. Some even believed the cattle to have the gift of language on Christmas Eve, but it was considered sinful to play the eavesdropper upon them. The Yule Log was lighted with embers of its predecessors to sanctify the roof-tree and protect it against evil spirits. The wassail bowl full of swimming roasted apples, went its merry round. Stockings were hung for St. Nicholas to fill during the night. The Waits—descendants of the minstrels of old—went through the snow from door to door, singing their mellow old carols.

There were masquerades and merry games of snap-dragon, hot-cockles, and blind-man's bluff. Superstitions of returning ghosts caused cleaning, baking, candle burning, dressing and serving supper. Even the Christmas dinner had its special observances. In English halls was the stately custom of bearing in a boar's head as a reminder of the student of Queens College, Oxford, who, attacked by a boar on Christmas day, choked him with a copy of Aristotle, and took his head back for dinner. The mince pie was supposed to commemorate, in its mixture of oriental ingredients, the offerings made by the wise men of the East. The candle was put in the windows to guide the little Christ-child who was supposed to wander in the guise of any alms-begging person.

In this review I have given some of the most beautiful Christmas customs which have been adopted for modern use with merely a changed spirit.

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by Carolyn Kirkpatrick

DISILLUSIONED

Crowds milling and swaying through the big department store; rich people, poor people, young people, old people and people of various colors! But in spite of the numerous physical differences they all have something in common, for it is the time when every one should be youthful and gay; Christmas spirit is in the air.

The heavy door of the great store is slowly pulled open by a very little, very black, negro boy. His eyes are shining; white teeth show in a huge grin. He is assisting an aged negro, his grandfather, who leans heavily on a stick. The old man's face is wrinkled by time and care, yet his dim old eyes shine brightly at this time, for has he not brought his little Jimmie "foah to see Sandy Claus?" Patiently they worm their way through the crowd; then painfully the pair climb the stairs up to the Toy Department.

Upon their arrival there, little Jimmie's eyes grew big as saucers with wonder and delight at the marvelous spectacle before him. There in the corner stands Santa Claus surrounded by a million toys—perhaps there seemed more to the little darkie than there really were.

"Now, son, go tel' ole Sandy Claus what you wan' him to fetch you' foah Christmus—go'n now; tell 'm."

Shyly the little boy walks over to Santa Claus. All the hopes and dreams for years back, for this is his first visit to Santa, are evident in the expression on his shiny black countenance. Closer he comes to good old Saint Nick. Patiently he awaits his turn to tell him of the things dearest to his heart. Now it is his turn to talk to Santa—then—

"Santa Claus is only for white children, boy."

It was like a bomb shell—like a streak of lightning from a clear sky, that simple statement. Crushed and hurt, miserably hurt, are the expressions very evident in the eyes of the little black boy.

The old man does not seem to be able to take in the tragedy. Misunderstanding and suffering are clearly seen in the eyes of the pair. When the awful truth is finally realized, the pathetic two turn slowly from the happy crowd and wend their way out of the store as if in a haze, utterly incapable of realizing that it is not a horrible dream but a reality.

May the Great One have mercy on any being who is so void of feeling as that one who posed as Santa Claus!

by Margaret Todd

MOON MAGIC

Ghostly dogwood blooms
Covered with glistening dew;
Shimmering shadows
Flit through the golden flood;
One star—ten—a million
Wink at the man in the moon.

A lonely lane
Shaded with willows;
Soft strains of a violin;
A girl—a boy
Youth—love
Moon magic!

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by Josephine Dandridge

THE SEASON'S SPIRIT, HERE AND THERE

It is dawn on Christmas morning! Snow is falling, and the silent drift during the night has wrapped the world in purest white. All is quiet in the big city. The shops and factories are closed that the employees might be able to spend a day of happiness and joy with their loved ones. From the cathedral tower sweet chimes burst forth; and in the distance the voices of boys and girls can be heard as they tramp through the snow, singing carols. Passing further down the street, one sees a small brick church, and a few cars are parked in front of it. If one steps to the door, he hears the strains of "Joy to the World" and sees a small group of people who have the true meaning of Christmas in their hearts.

In the residential section, windows and doors wear holly wreaths. In some of the houses, a crackling fire can be seen dancing upon a wide open hearth, or perhaps a lighted Christmas tree and a father distributing the gifts among his family. Smiling children peer through the frosty window panes. One or two husky boys have braved the cold snow and are joyfully playing with their new sleds.

On the hill stands a large stone house, wherein all is quiet. Servants move noiselessly about their work. This is the home of a wealthy merchant, and he and his family have all the luxuries they could wish. Christmas means but another day to them; another day of sleeping until noon, luncheon, a theatre party, dinner, and dancing until the "wee" hours of the morning. If they only knew what joy and happiness they might give to others!

In contrast, if one walks through the narrow cobblestone streets which are in the slums of the city, he sees a very different picture. It is bitterly cold, and in some of the small houses there is no fire. In others, there are children huddled together, in an endeavor to keep warm before a few dying embers.

The little shacks and flats are built very close together; yet they are so poorly built that the biting winds soon find their way between the cracks. Gazing down the street, one can see a group of social service workers or some good soul who has felt that the true spirit of Christmas is not only receiving but giving. From house to house they carry warmth and cheer. Many a tired, weary father is relieved from pain by the medicine which they bring or warmed by appropriate clothing. Children shout gleefully as a new pair of shoes or a tiny toy is given to them. Fruit and wholesome foods in baskets sit upon the floor. After weeks of suffering a ton of coal is delivered in the back yard. Could any one wish for more? What a wonderful spirit to have—that of giving happiness to others, for that is wherein one's own happiness lies. It means Service and Happiness, and these two words can make Christmas more and more as it is intended to be.

It is especially fitting at this time of the year that we remember that wonderful scene, two thousand years ago when Our Lord was born and remember the Peace and Joy which accompanied Him. When one gives, he is not only giving comfort and happiness to the needy, but he is truly worshipping the Christ-Child whose birthday we celebrate at Christmas-tide.

by Catherine H. Jones

THE CHRISTMAS HOME

The Greene home was a Christmas home. For two weeks there was celebrating in general, and decorations of holly, mistletoe, and soda sprinkled evergreens. There was turkey and everything to go with it. There was a reason for its being called "the Christmas home." In the first place, it was out in the country and steeped with the atmosphere of grand old country customs. Mr. Greene's muddy boots were always on the hearth, especially on Christmas eve; pop corn from the fields was popped, colored and strung to trim the tree; the children's stockings—little black, warm stockings—hung in a row. Mother Greene always read "It Was The Night Before Christmas" and Dickens' Christmas stories.

But alas! When they "moved to the city"—there were no fire places, no live cedars and no natural decorations. The turkey wasn't nearly so good as Mrs. Greene could have fixed, and the partridges that they always had on Christmas night were missing. Then Mr. Greene said he just wasn't going to have things that way. He was the harmless kind of man—you know, the big, round, fat type. And Mrs. Greene agreed that things should not be as they were. The house stood, blown by winter winds, gray and still. No smoke curled from the chimney, and on Christmas eve not even muddy boots kept company with the cold hearth—surely the old house was lonesome.

But, Christmas comes just once a year, and the years roll by in a hurry. The Greenes were found in their old domain, again. It was Christmas that drew them back. It was Christmas that manifested the

beauty of the home and displayed their home-keeping hearts.

No more did the winds blowing through the chinks fill the house with chilliness, for there was love there. They call it "the Christmas home."

by Inez Dellinger

TO A JAZZ SINGER

You gurgle with abandon, gay;
Do you always feel that way?

Even with your pert conclusions
Do you still have your illusions?

You have views decided, sure;
Do you find that they endure?

Implicit love you sing about;
Do you ever, ever doubt?

In your constant formulae
Do you ever find a lie?

Debonair from day to day,
Do you always feel that way?

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by Rebecca Hassell

JAPANESE CHRISTMAS

For a long time ahead the shops and streets are decorated with red, yellow, and green paper rope. Yards of it stretch down the streets from post to lantern post, each bearing a large red lantern.

The small shops which line the streets make the most of their space. From their windows gleam all the brightest-colored and most attractive goods. The elaborate interior decorations exude through every crack. Frequently a green pine tree loaded with gold and silver balls and tufts of cotton, and hung with dangling red cotton or celluloid Santa Clauses take up a large proportion of the room inside the sliding glass doors.

Occasionally the early New Year decorations have been placed out in front of some home to serve for Christmas tide too. There are two groups of symbolic decorations, one on each side of the door. These are the pine tree, a sprig of naked plumtree, and three beautifully cut green bamboo stems. The three elements are bound together very neatly with new straw rope and fastened securely in the ground. Around the base are heaps of clean sea sand.

Many doorways have above them the yearly new signs of Shinto faith, the straw rope with dangling strips of white paper. On the lintels appear the cornucopia-shaped twists of straw hung together with a pressed dried fish and a tangerine.

It is Christmas Day. People throng the streets, many in holiday attire, but some are in everyday clothes and many are in very scant rags. The stores are doing business, but not in Christmas presents.

There are sales of artistically decorated cakes in pretty false-bottomed boxes, properly wrapped in white paper and tied around with even strands of red and white paper string. With the ends exposed and a small "no-shi" (formal sticker) affixed to the box in the upper right-hand side, the gift is ready for the buyer.

Christmas is associated with "Santa Kurogu" and dressed-up trees, pictures of the Wise men under the star and the Babe in the stable. But gifts, and the spirit of holiday, friendliness and joy are saved until New Years.

Such preparations as "Machi" making are going on in the open streets and down the alleys. The even stacks of wooden seives give off whiffs of steam from the cooking rice inside. Farther away the mallets in the hands of three men take turns in doing their part in the regular rhythm of the plop—plop, plop. In that pause a fourth fellow turns the white doughy mass into the stone mortar. Small biscuits of rice-cakes are to come from the hands of the cake-maker and placed on trays, to be tinted, decorated and sold. They will appear again before a visitor in a home, served hot and puffed, together with a cup of Japanese tea.

by Lucy Woodworth

WORSHIP

Our Saviour came down from above
And dwelt among us, bound by love.
The Holy Ghost did give Him birth,
Through the Virgin here on earth.

He, for us, a babe became.
When grown up, He healed the lame.
He made all the sick be well,
And died to save us each from Hell.

On the third day He arose
From His calm but brief repose.
Sometime later He ascended
With His work on earth full ended.

Two thousand years have passed since then.
Sometime He will come again.
He will take us home on high
And our souls shall never die.

May we for that time be ready
With our faith both strong and steady.
For our Christ, we thank thee, Lord.
May He to us peace afford.

As to the Christmas time we drift
May we remember Thy great gift,
And thank Thee for the Saviour born
On that far-off December Morn.

by Mary McNinch

THE BATTERED PICTURE

In the pilot house of a Hudson River ferry hangs, oddly enough, a weather-beaten portrait, a portrait of a child seated primly upon a photographer's bench, her little high buttoned shoes dangling in mid-air, her long curls making her top-heavy.

At the wheel stands grey old Peter Werner, peering down the river through the evening gloom. He glances at the picture frequently; audible sighs communicate to the assistant that Werner's thoughts are upon other things than ferries and rivers.

"May I relieve you, Skipper?"

"No tanks, Thomas. I'll take her across. Hazy a bit, tonight. Ach. Not like die old country. Na."

Silence, then bells on the river, a tug horn. The boat winds in and out. In six minutes after leaving the other wharf the boat grinds against the pier—the skipper maintains that the noise has become no less grating in the twelve years he's been making this run. The gangplank creaked into place. The horde rush onto the Jersey shore, intent upon catching the 6:19 for Bound Brook, Sommerville—a dozen tiny suburbs.

Another horde plunges on, the gangplank shrieks a warning, the lights twinkle from the shore, and then recede.

A couple lean against the railing. They laugh, then a girl's voice:

"Vould he let us?"

"Nothing like trying," a young man replied.

The two turn, make for the stairs, ascend, knock on the pilot house door.

"Come. Vell no fisitors allowed in here," he explains.

But the girl's voice is soft. "Can ve vatch yust a minute? The lights are so tvinkle."

The young man lights a cigarette. In the flare the girl sees a picture of a tiny child seated on a bench.

"Oh. Tell one. Iss she your little madchen?"

"Ja. Yes."

"Tell. Please."

"Ach. Yes. She iss mein little girl. I came across fourteen years ago. I have not seen her since. I vork hard. I tink I send for her, but she never got my letter. She never comes, that is, she—Someday I tink she vill come." A wistfulness falls over the old man.

"Oh! Poor mann. I have from the old country only a year come. I lose mein mutter, and mein vater he go away long time and ve do not hear. Ve tink maybe he dead. Ja!"

For a moment, silence. Then the moon rises. The girl turns to look once more at the picture. A tiny girl, curls; so like the one on her wall at Wartburg. ach.

"What is the little girl's name?"

"Elizabeth."

"Elizabeth! Das iss mein name. Ja."

The man turns, gazes at her. His heart beat quickens—Both cry:

"What is your other name?"

Both answer, "Werner!"—a ferry, a battered picture, a father and daughter reunited.

Peter Werner will still make his daily runs from Jersey to 23rd street, but not alone, for a loving daughter sits or stands with him in the pilot house, or meets him at the New York side to ride across and back on his last run. She brings him fruit or a little cake which they enjoy together.

She clerks in the hosiery department in Wannamaker's basement, he pilots a ferry, yet these two have so much in common, so much to tell each other. The rest of their lives will scarce suffice to make up for the time in which they were apart. Be that undecided or not, no doubt their lives will continue harmoniously together while, yet, they both live.

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We wish to acknowledge the receipt of the following magazines: The Aurora (Nov. issue); Voices of Peace (Oct. issue); The Mary Baldwin Miscellany (Nov. issue); Message (Nov. issue); The Criterion (Nov. issue); and The Erosthesian (Nov. issue).

We enjoyed "Branded" by Ada Newton which appeared in The Criterion. It was a rather clever handling of a commonplace theme. Virginia Cox, in the Voices of Peace, has expressed a feeling we all have sometime in life in her "After the Blindness." We wish Agnes Scott to know that we think The Aurora was a fine magazine in its Nov. issue. The cover was especially attractive and the content was entertaining, to say the least.

The
SCEPTRE
December
1930
◆

by Ariel McNinch

CHINA PIG

My proud little china pig.
Not the pig read of in the fable,
Nor the type who dances a jig,
But a pig who sits on a table.

He lives on all stray pennies,
I drop them into his back,
I suppose he might prefer guineas
They form a larger stack.

How could he know, conceited pig,
So vain and contented—dash him;
That when I need my pennies,
I shall be forced to smash him.

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